

## Match Report

Maidstone 3<sup>rd</sup> XV 33 vs Snowdown CW XV 31

League: Invicta 3

The Mote, Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September. Kick-off 15:00

On a bright September afternoon, Maidstone kicked off their 2012/13 Invicta 3 league campaign by hosting Snowdown in a game that ebbed and flowed from start to finish.

This game was always going to prove tough for Maidstone as it was clear that Snowdown were going to try and control the match physically from the off. With Maidstone playing down the slope in the first half, a strong first 40 minutes would be essential and with a solid pack and a backline full of attacking prowess, Maidstone themselves were looking to get off to a flying start.

With Snowdown kicking off straight to the Maidstone pack, the battle for forward supremacy began. Maidstone were looking to dominate the breakdown and keep the ball tight, however Snowdown were not going to let them have it all their own way. Massive tackles were going in from both sides and neither team were getting the footing in the game that they were looking for.



Both sets of backs were looking to run the ball when possible and this led to a very open first quarter that was flowing from one try line to the other. Maidstone had pace all over the backline, and they exploited this both through the centres and out on the wings, but it was the final pass or decision that prevented them from scoring.

Snowdown's attacking flair and pace came mainly through the 10 and 13 and both could have broken through but for some excellent defensive play spearheaded by John Hogarth at 10, and Ian Howson at 15.

With twenty five minutes gone there was still no score. Maidstone had unluckily missed a penalty as John Hogarth's effort drifted agonisingly to the right of the posts, but Maidstone had begun to exert some real pressure. The Maidstone pack had started to take control of the scrum and had already won several against the head. Maidstone were brimming with confidence, so when Maidstone won a scrum 20 metres out there seemed to be a real sense of anticipation.



The scrum comfortably won, Maidstone broke down the blind side and Paul Murphy was there to weave his way through the flailing Snowdown defence and score by the posts. A simple conversion for John Hogarth and Maidstone were leading 7-0.

Maidstone needed to remain composed and build on their success, but how quickly things could turn. Straight from the re-start two Maidstone players went for the ball with neither player

gathering, and the Snowdown 12 collected in the loose and Maidstone were on the back foot.

Maidstone's defence held firm with some strong tackling, but with a couple of quick re-cycles, the Snowdown 10 picked up from the base of a ruck, sold a dummy to the defender and beat the Maidstone defence on the inside scoring under the posts. Snowdown were behind for less than two minutes, the score 7-7.

Maidstone were flustered by the turn around and more and more errors crept into their play. Knockons, poor passing and missed tackles meant that Maidstone were inviting pressure onto themselves. Maidstone found themselves playing largely around their own 22 metre line, and Snowdown were looking to capitalise on the Maidstone mistakes.



A break by the Snowdown 12 sucked in the two Maidstone centres creating space for the Snowdown 13 to break the line. Snowdown now had a 3 on 2 and simple passing allowed the Snowdown winger to cross the line. Maidstone were now down by 7.

Snowdown were now fully in the ascendancy and Maidstone were finding it difficult to keep them at bay, and it wasn't long before Snowdown found another score. As the Snowdown pack upped their physical game they setup another platform, this time for the Snowdown 7 to touchdown. A missed conversion and the halftime score was Maidstone 7, Snowdown 19.



The halftime break brought a couple of changes in the backline with Dane Smith and Mike Laurenson coming into the centres. Maidstone regrouped and started the second half with intent.

Maidstone showed their attacking strength and the forwards re-asserted themselves as the dominant pack. Driving play up the left side of the field ended up with Gary Whitehead on hand to run the ball in under the posts. Mike Laurenson took up the kicking mantle and duly kicked the extra two points. Five minutes gone in the second half and Maidstone were back in the game, 14-19.

Snowdown were clearly unsettled and their frustrations began to boil over. This indiscipline allowed Maidstone to play their game and a poor Snowdown clearing kick fielded by David Ruaux on the wing, was fed to Ian Howson coming in from full back to pass the ball to Dan Taylor. Dan steamed through the upcoming defence, and after some fine interplay between Dan and Dane Smith, Dane touched down under the posts. Maidstone had turned it around, now winning 21-19.

Maidstone's lead would be short lived though as the game then flowed in Snowdown's favour. Although there were fewer errors in the game, Maidstone did suffer some indiscipline of their own giving away a series of consecutive penalties. This forced Maidstone back into their 22, and a break through the Maidstone line was held up in goal under the posts. From the resulting scrum, Snowdown kept the ball tight and another missed tackle allowed Snowdown to score. A somewhat



simple conversion missed, but the game was back in Snowdown's favour: 21-26.



Snowdown continued to play a territorial game looking to pin Maidstone in their own 22. Another 5-metre scrum saw Snowdown cross the Maidstone line, only for the ball to be fumbled. Ultimately the pressure did come off and it was more defensive lapses that allowed Snowdown to touchdown again. 21-31, and ten minutes to go. Maidstone had it all to do.

Being ten points down seemed to spark Maidstone back into life. The whole team dug deep and Maidstone were determined to play the final ten minutes as they knew they could. More superb forward play and a well drilled backline kept the ball deep in Snowdown's half. Dominant driving and quick re-cycles found Rooky on hand to force his way over the line. No conversion this time, but only 5 points down.

Maidstone had their tails up, and all they needed was one more chance. Quickly fielding the re-start, the ball was moved to the backs. Dane Smith making a trademark break in midfield found Dan Eastwood in support to sidestep one player and then beat the cover for pace from 20 metres out. The score by the posts would normally mean a simple conversion, but with barely anytime left on the clock, Mike Laurenson had the game in his hands. A confident conversion scored and Maidstone had won. The final score; Maidstone 33 – Snowdown 31.



Either team could have won this game, and Maidstone can be truly proud for the ability to dig deep and turn around a game that could have got away. Maidstone's attacking ability means that they are always a threat going forward, however there were some clear defensive issues that must be resolved, but with one win from one game, and victory snatched from the jaws of defeat, this is a very positive start to the league campaign.

This week's MOTM performance goes to Ben Rookledge for knocking down people twice his size, disrupting the oppositions play and chipping in with a try.

Written by David Ruaux

Squad:

Mayhem: Richard Grey: Mark Thurgood: Dan Taylor: Adrian Clark: Gary Whitehead: Ed Adams: Wilky: Paul Murphy: Hogy: Dan Eastwood: David Ruaux: Justin Evans: Banners: Ian Howson: Mike Laurenson: Dane Smith: Rooky